

# Home's Hallowed History Rediscovered

By KEITH L. MARTIN

Many people are proud of their homes and will regale you with the latest new additions to their dwelling. Dan Yates, on the other hand, can't wait to tell you how old his Pine Hill Avenue house is and has the facts to back it up.

In addition to the titles of homeowner and pilot, Yates can now add author to the resume of his life after putting together the definitive history on his house and its inhabitants.

What began as an effort to get a dateboard for the Federal style home turned into an exploration of the true history of the house that he and wife Deborah fell in love with, and purchased in 1993.

"We'd always wanted an old home and one of the things that attracted us to this house was the great history behind it," said Yates. "The previous owner had done some preliminary research and put up his own home-made dateboard of 1840, but when we started looking into it, we realized the house was significantly older."

To gain an official dateboard through the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, Yates had to research the history of the home and rather than hire a professional, he decided to hit the books himself and spent 1995 and 1996 gathering as much information as he could. His work would culminate in 2003 with a 17-page history of the home.

In addition to the local resources through the Society's archives, Yates also went to the Mayflower Society in Plymouth to get information from as far back in time as he could to determine when in fact the house had first been constructed.

What he discovered was not only that the house has been around for over 200 years, but also a number of fascinating stories of those who lived under its roof.

According to documentation from an 1916 edition of the New England Historical and Genealogical Register on the Peterson Family of Duxbury, Yates discovered that the house really dates back to 1801 when Jonathan Peterson III, a descendant of one of the *Mayflower's* passengers, allowed his son, George, to build a house on the corner of his land in preparation for his wedding held on April 5 of that year. It's believed that the house was to be ready so the couple could start their new life together after their nuptials.

George Peterson, a master mariner, died mysteriously in Cuba in 1818 at the age of 40, leaving behind a simple will containing half a pew in the meeting house, some navigational instruments and the land and the house it sat on, valued at \$1,500.

The house remained in the Peterson name until 1868, when the deed was transferred to Deborah Weston, wife of local and state politician Gershom Bradford Weston, and daughter-in-law to Ezra Weston, Jr., better known as King Caesar.

For information into the Weston family, Yates did a little 21st century detective work.

Yates found and purchased a copy of a book written by Gershom's son, Edmund, on the Internet given to a library in the town of Beverly in 1917 and got a firsthand account of the family's life around that time.

Following a fire that destroyed Gershom's uninsured mansion in 1850, he rebuilt the structure but the effort made him penniless. He was forced to borrow money from his brother, Alden, who later foreclosed on a mortgage and evicted him, forcing Gershom and his wife to rent the Peterson home in 1867. A year later, Gershom's friends in the state Senate collected money to purchase the house in Deborah's name to keep it from her husband's debt. Gershom died soon after in 1869.

In the book about his parents, Edmund recalls how "pathetic that as his end was drawing near," his father could look out of the windows of the Peterson house to his "once magnificent estate hardly a stone's throw away."

Alden would later sell the estate to George and Georgianna Wright, who later passed the land to the Ellison family, who donated it to the town to build the new high school.

Deborah Weston lived in the house until 1877, leaving it to the couple's two daughters who occupied the home until 1915.

Following a brief ownership by Walter Delano, the Ripley family purchased the house in 1916, and took such good care of the family's all-around handyman, William St. Clair Mosher, that Mosher moved into the home that year and acquired the deed in 1926.

For the next 62 years, the Mosher children would occupy the home, updating it in 1945 with an addition in the back and a few years later, building a porch on the west-side of the house that still exists today.

In 1977, George and Mary Dresser bought the house, making several renovations, until selling it in 1993 to the Yates family. Currently, Dan Yates and his wife Deborah, a veterinarian at The Visiting Vet-Ashdod Animal Hospital, live in the home with their 12-year-old son, Stephen, and nine-year-old daughter, Rebecca.

Yates credits a great deal of information he gathered to personal interviews with everyone from members of the Mosher family to a chance connection to their son's best friend's family, who also had a connection to the Mosher. Others, like the Vautrains of Tremont Street, offered a tour of their home, constructed in 1796, that includes similar features to the Peterson house.

Yates submitted his 17-page report to the Society for the home's dateboard in October of 1993. Two months later, the dateboard was delivered by Executive Director Patrick Browne, to the delight of the entire family.

"It sat in the house the rest of the winter and we just looked at it and were so delighted," said Yates.



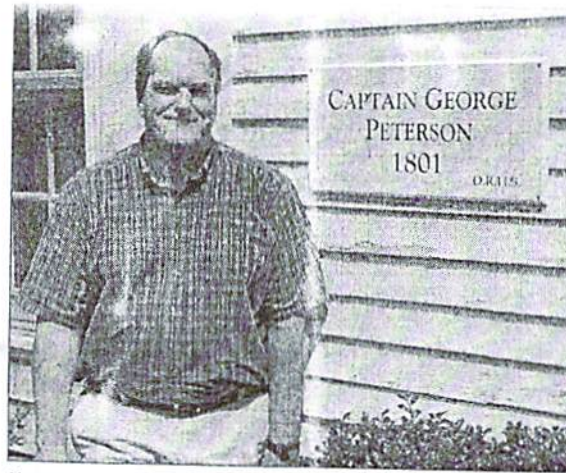
From the 30-foot by 30-foot fieldstone foundation, to a large brick arch in the basement which supports the central chimney structure for all six fireplaces in the home, there is definitely a sense of the past in 2004 and Yates wouldn't have it any other way.

"When you live in an old home, you make compromises," he said. "It's not as comfortable as a modern home in some respects, but from the fireplaces to the remaining beehive oven...you can update an old house to make it livable, and you are so tempted to destroy its originality and you have to fight that."

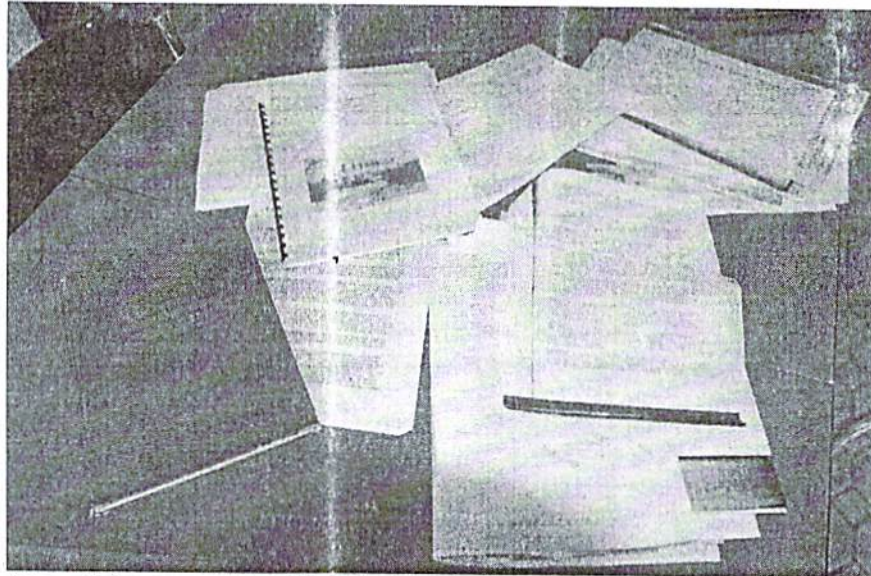
The Yates hope to make their own history in the home, passing it along to Stephen and Rebecca and their families who will hopefully have as storied a future as the tales of the past recently rediscovered.

*Dan Yates is still seeking input on the history of his house at 21 Pine Hill Avenue and welcomes any information from citizens who may have information he has not uncovered.*

*Please feel free to e-mail him at [dyates@adelphia.net](mailto:dyates@adelphia.net)*



Homeowner Dan Yates proudly stands with the dateboard on his house, a symbol of its history and his hard work to trace the lineage of all who called the dwelling home since 1801.



Yates relied on research from the Duxbury Rural and Historic Society, the Mayflower Society and a 1912 book on the Weston family he found and bought via the Internet.



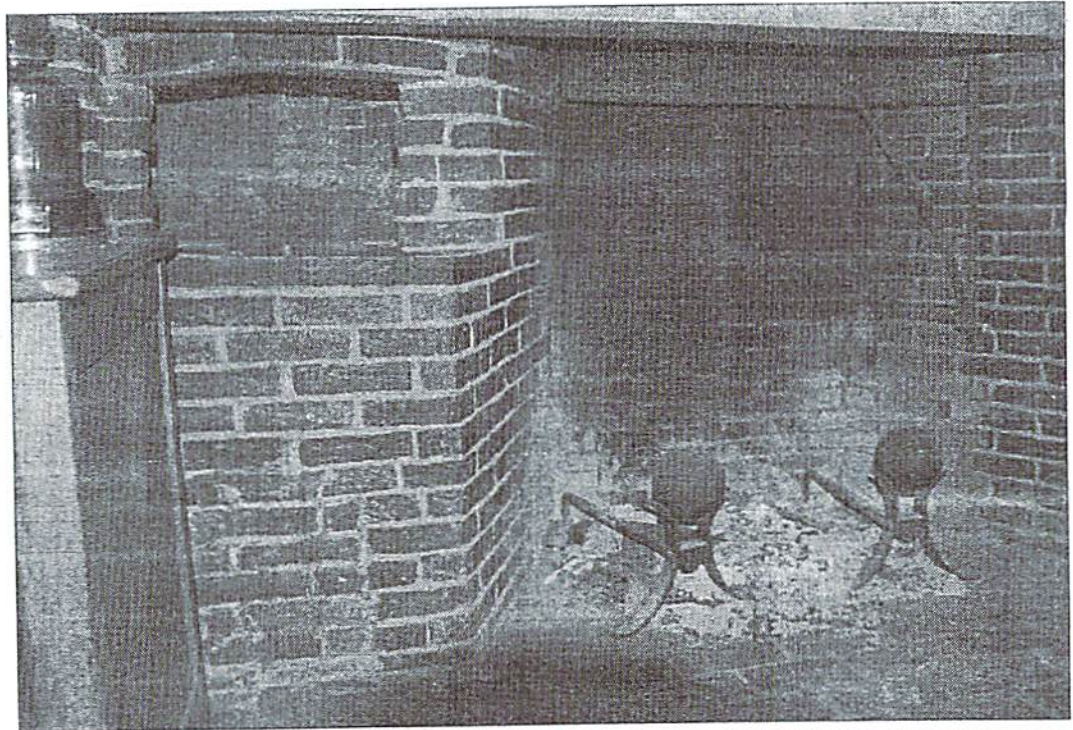
The house currently sitting at 21 Pine Hill Ave. is a little different than this version from 1947 with an added porch, first floor bay window and missing shutters. It is a three-quarter design, which refers to the front design of two windows on one side of the front door and one window on the other side, creating a square footprint.



Historical Houses <sup>Named,</sup> M-Z

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The living room fireplace still contains the metal crane to hang pots and a small beehive oven on the left used for baking centuries ago.